



CITY OF SOMERVILLE, MASSACHUSETTS
URBAN FORESTRY COMMITTEE
JOSEPH A. CURTATONE
MAYOR

Urban Forestry Committee Meeting
THURSDAY, FEBRUARY 18, 2021 4:30PM
MINUTES

Due to COVID-19 virus containment efforts, this meeting was held remotely.

A recording of the meeting can be accessed here:

<https://attendee.gotowebinar.com/recording/2934512285241951503>

Meeting notes prepared by Henry Ayanna & Vanessa Boukili

Committee Members in attendance: Althea Northcross (co-chair), Chris Dwan (co-chair), Amy Mertl, Conor Guidarelli, Jennifer Clifford, Malik Drayton (ex-officio; Tree Warden designee), Vanessa Boukili (ex-officio; Senior Urban Forestry and Landscape Planner), Tori Antonino, Henry Ayanna

Committee Members absent: none

Others in Attendance: Leah Grossman

Call to Order: Northcross called meeting to order at 4:36 pm followed by introductions

1. Introductions / Housekeeping (4:42)

- a) New meeting platform?
 - i. Dwan suggested using GoToMeeting as opposed to GoToWebinar, the current platform.
 - ii. Drayton recalls that GT Webinar was selected because of the greater capacity of participants.
 - iii. Boukili says GT Webinar allows for more control over the community.
 - iv. Chair will be given Organizer status on GT Webinar going forward.

2. Resident Concerns (4:47)

- a) Dwan - Eversource wires infringing on several trees on his street, causing damage to them. Eversource interpreted the complaint as an “urban hazard” tree report, and almost removed the trees. (Ivaloo street). Any updates?
 - i. Boukili – no known updates

3. Mission of the Committee (4:50)

- a) No changes

4. Updates from City (4:52)

a) City Tree Removals

- i. Boukili -None since previous meeting
- ii. Dwan - would be useful to know the removal to replacement ratio of the city's trees.
- iii. Boukili - reports that last fiscal year more trees were planted than removed in the city.
- iv. Northcross - Asks if the city is at the point of responding to new removals or if they are working on the back-log of trees identified for removal.
- v. Boukili - Backlog still exists, but is dwindling.
- vi. Northcross/Clifford - Asks about the current removal/replacement rate
- vii. Boukili – removal rate is decreasing. Generally increasing planting rate, but lower last year because of COVID.
- viii. Clifford - asks what is the survival rate for trees 2 years after planting.
- ix. Boukili – did analysis for subset of city a few years back and thinks survival rate was 90% or greater. Will have to check data. Would be a worthwhile question to pursue in more depth. Harvard students did a project to match 2009 and 2018 tree inventories – can do survival analysis with this dataset.
- x. Boukili - trees of invasive species are disproportionately removed, mainly Norway Maples.
- xi. Antonino - What is the estimated 150 removed trees per year figure in the Urban Forest Management Plan predicated on?
- xii. Boukili - it is an average of the per annum figures of tree removals

b) Private Tree Removal Permits and Exemptions (5:02)

i. Permits

- 1. In processing

ii. Exemptions - presented by Drayton

- 1. 13 Cooney street
- 2. 66 Avon street

c) Urban Forestry Management Plan

- i. Boukili - graphic design is coming along nicely - one more section to design.
- ii. Dawn - On BUFF mailing list, Boston has just started the process of their urban management plan; they just selected a consultant. They appear to be 3 to 4 years behind Somerville.

5. Tree Keeper Inventory (5:07)

- a) Dwan - asks if would be useful from a budget perspective to field tree data from volunteers.
- b) Boukili - easiest step would be to take data already compiled by Boukili and Drayton and input it into Treekeeper. Wouldn't be perfectly accurate, but still accurate enough to be meaningful. Wants to preserve the rigor of the data.
- c) Northcross - asks when the last big update to Tree Keeper inventory was.
- d) Boukili - the creation of the inventory.
- e) Northcross - asks how the committee can contribute to the data collection.

- f) Boukili - Would be happy to train committee members to take/input rigorous data.
- g) Guidarelli - asks if the trees planted 7 years ago have been checked up upon.
- h) Boukili - data is sparse before I was in this position
- i) Northcross - could imagine breaking up tracking by wards
- j) Clifford - could spread out the data taking
- k) Guidarelli - suggests the idea of using these data points to identify hotspots for tree decline.
- l) Clifford - concurs

6. Working Group Updates (5:20)

- a) Arbor Day Planning
 - i. 2020/5th grade poster contest (Northcross, Mertl, Clifford)
 - 1. Clifford - deadline for poster submission is March 1st. Categorized by school. Plan is to involve blind judges - anonymously assign each poster to each judge.
 - 2. Mertl - suggests a google form evaluation.
 - 3. Boukili - says should not be any group deliberation.
 - 4. Several members share their enthusiasm for the posters.
 - ii. Adopt-a-Tree program
 - 1. Northcross - would like to give “parents” of adopted trees a picture guide for what healthy trees should look like. Supplies are all in order.
 - iii. ROOT collaboration
 - 1. Northcross - Clifford and Northcross meet with the “Respecting Our Old Trees” group; they want to relocate a photo exhibit in Davis Square to East Somerville. Held discussion on how residents can submit nominations for special trees. Considering the creation of a walking map of meaningful trees.
 - 2. Leah - suggests polling people while in line for COVID-19 tests or in line COVID-19 shots
 - iv. Boukili - fields the committee for the choice of which day to celebrate as Somerville arbor day.
 - 1. Northcross - favors a spring-time date when trees are in bloom, which is slightly later than national arbor day. Mid-May?
- b) GLX Corridor
 - i. No new information
- c) Funding/ Fundraising
 - i. Guidarelli - asks if the city has allocated a specific fund the committee can have access to.
 - ii. Boukili – have money to order Arbor Day supplies. Plan to ask for a specific funds for UFC in FY2022 budget.
- d) Tree Species Selection and Planting Standards
 - i. Guidarelli - shared a document before the meeting that is a modification of the recommended species list from the Urban Forest Management Plan. Document highlights the importance of native species, including specific cultivars, and aims to enrich the original species list. For example, separated out the Malus cultivars as some are native but most are not. Highlighted Chinese toon as a weed risk assessment, as it resembles the tree of heaven. Pretty tree, but extremely aggressive.
 - ii. Antonino - hoping this can become a working document which can be tweaked over time. Important to consider which species we should be growing that aren’t necessarily street trees (for pollinators/wildlife), aesthetic considerations (pursuant to the local cherry cultivar). Suggested

our native holly tree for planting – it is a single-stemmed tree, so easy to manage. Good candidate for a street tree. Juniper is another strong candidate to make the list. Witch hazel might as well, examples at Prospect Hill park.

- iii. Guidarelli - Also points out that green-leaf varieties of *Prunus virginiana* are preferred.
 - iv. Antonino - Any red-leaf varietal is inedible for caterpillars, renders the ecological impact almost moot; purely aesthetic appeal. So, looking to avoid the red-leaf varietal (i.e. schubert, Canada red)
 - v. Guidarelli - large pull-and-tug between what the nursery offers and what we want for the community. Looking to aim for a target of a majority of recommended species. Would be difficult to get majority native trees in the ground near in the future (43% native, 57% non-native species at present in Somerville)? Maybe make a goal of a certain ratio of native to non-native.
 - vi. Boukili - the goal is to plant 50% native species.
 - vii. Guidarelli - If for every invasive tree that gets removed, could we be strategic about planting a native species? Would like to increase the native tree options and reducing introduced tree options for tree planting.
 - viii. Boukili – also has made edits to the species list - removed several trees for practical reasons - branch height, vigor and size of roots, susceptibility to disease/pests.
 - ix. Guidarelli - asks if there are any updates to bidding for saplings for the spring.
 - x. Boukili – bid has been released. Based on TPSS recommendations, added requirement of putting compost in tree wells for newly planted trees.
 - xi. Antonino - would be interested in a pilot for planting smaller trees.
 - xii. Boukili – send me a proposal with details and we can make sure it's a rigorous pilot.
- e) Outreach
- i. Covered in previous topics

7. Approval of Minutes from Previous Meetings (6:27)

- a. November 19th, 2020
- b. December 17th, 2020
- c. January 28th, 2021

Call to vote to approve all three meeting minutes:

- 1. Yay: Mertl, Dwan, Guidarelli, Ayana, Clifford, Drayton, Boukili, Northcross, Antonino
- 2. Nay: none
- 3. Abstain: none

Adjourn: Motion to adjourn meeting unanimously approved at 6:30 pm [motion - Boukili , second - Dwan
vote: 9:0:0]